

VZCZCXRO5109
PP RUEHBC RUEHDH RUEHKUK
DE RUEHGB #1913/01 1951906
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 141906Z JUL 09 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3931
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 001913

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/14/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PINS](#) [KPAO](#) [SCUL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: PRT SALAH AD DIN: SADDAM'S UNIVERSITY AS A
BELLWETHER FOR CHANGE

Classified By: Salah Ad Din PRT Leader David Stewart for reasons 1.4 (b)
) .

This is a PRT Salah ad Din (SAD) reporting cable.

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Both the SAD PRT and its Coalition Forces (CF) partner have had increasing success in building positive connections with the University of Tikrit, a notable change from the University's previous unwillingness to work with Americans generally and open hostility toward CF. Over the last six months, instead of concentrating money on reconstruction and development projects, the focus has been on building relationships between diplomats and scholars, soldiers and students, and between the University of Tikrit itself and American schools. This investment of time and effort has yielded dramatically different results: we are now welcomed onto the campus several times a week, professors and students are eager to collaborate, and the President of the University even hosted a banquet for an Embassy delegation from the Embassy. This change is not taking place in isolation. The recent flourishing of connections between USG agencies and the University of Tikrit reflects a promising transformation across SAD Province. END SUMMARY.

PAST HOSTILITY TOWARD AMERICANS

12. (C) In the past, both the SAD PRT and its partner military units attempted to work with the University of Tikrit, which was established in Saddam Hussein's hometown in 1987, but they often encountered a hostile reception from the University. Few university officials would meet with CF, and those who did told the U.S. military and the PRT to stay away from campus. The University has been used as a source for raising funds for the insurgency, along with helping to facilitate and harbor insurgents. Indeed, the number two CF target for the Tikrit battalion remains a professor there, whom CF assesses to be a leading Al Qaeda in Iraq recruiter and facilitator.

PD EFFORTS HIGHLIGHT POSITIVE CHANGE

13. (SBU) But while pockets of tensions remain, during the last six months both the PRT and its supporting brigade have received an increasingly positive reception from the larger university community. At the start of 2009, the SAD PRT Public Diplomacy Officer (PDO) began a concerted effort at outreach toward the University. During the PDO's meetings with faculty from the University, it became clear that instead of money and projects they sought respect and the opportunity to reconnect with the world. The PDO started by focusing on building connections between the University and its American counterparts.

14. (C) Through a series of video conferences, the PRT has been able to link the University of Tikrit with several major American schools. The American schools have embraced the opportunity to develop relations with Iraqi scholars. They have extended invitations to professors from Tikrit to come

to their campuses, attend conferences, and some have even planned trips to come to Iraq. In early June, with help from the Embassy's Public Affairs section, the University's President, Dr. Maher Saleh, and two of his colleagues attended the Atlantic Coast Conference of Universities' meeting in Istanbul. They were hailed as pioneers at the conference; the Iraqis described it as "a golden opportunity." The University of South Carolina's Moore School of Business is planning to send two high-level representatives to Tikrit to develop their plans for partnership.

¶5. (SBU) The PRT has also been working with the University in Q5. (SBU) The PRT has also been working with the University in several other areas. Soldiers now go to campus each month to hold English chats with students, American officials are now regularly giving lectures on campus, 500 students attended a recent college fair organized jointly by the PRT and the brigade, and on June 24, the University inaugurated the first study abroad center in Iraq to promote study in the United States. The brigade recently organized a tour of COB Speicher for the President of the University and the deans. During the visit the Iraqi academics suggested that there should be more joint training initiatives between the military and the University.

COMMENT

¶6. (U) What has been taking place at the University of Tikrit is a reflection of trends the PRT is seeing across the Province. As the security situation has improved, once hostile individuals and institutions are seeing the practical

* Missing Section 002 *
